



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

July 10, 2006

The Honorable Bill Hardiman, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on FIA
Michigan State Senate
State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Rick Shaffer, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Senator Hardiman and Representative Shaffer:

Section 679 of Public Act 147 of 2005 requires the Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHS) to implement 1 pilot program in 4 to 6 of the departmentally recognized shelter areas to assist long-term family independence program recipients to achieve self-sufficiency. It also requires the MDHS report to the house and senate appropriations committees and house and senate fiscal agencies the policies established, the sanctions applied to participants, an assessment of barriers to employment, services needed to address those barriers, and recommendations to reduce the number of recipient caseloads receiving cash assistance for more than 48 months.

The Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) pilots were established to meet requirements in the bill. The details of the pilot design and expected outcomes were included in oral and written testimony provided to your committees during the FY2007 budget hearings this spring. The pilot sites did not begin to phase in operations until April 2006 and will not be fully operational until July 2006. The attached report provides the information and data that is available at this time. Further information and updates will be provided as the pilot activities progress.

If you have any questions, please contact John Sorbet, chief administrative officer, at 373-7787.

Sincerely,

Marianne Udow

cc: Senate and House Appropriations Committees
Senate and House Fiscal Agencies
Senate and House Policy Offices
State Budget Director

FIP Self-Sufficiency Pilot

The FIP Self-Sufficiency Pilot officially began in April, 2006 in Kent County, Sanilac County, Oakland County (Madison Heights District), and Wayne County (Glendale/Trumbull District). All of the pilot sites have developed and are implementing strategies that target families who have received Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for 48 months or more. In addition, the pilot sites are serving all FIP applicants and recipients with a new set of strategies known as “Jobs, Education and Training (JET)”. The DHS and Michigan Works Agency directors in each of the sites worked with community partners to develop a local JET plan. The JET pilots began phasing in their strategies and activities in April and will be fully operational in July 2006. Policies already implemented include:

- The Jobs and Self-Sufficiency Survey is now completed by FIP clients at intake to make a preliminary barrier assessment determination regarding readiness to refer to JET.
- Pilot counties can identify and provide Direct Support Services that will allow the client to participate in required activities.
- Non-compliance is handled swiftly through joint “triage” meetings involving DHS, JET, the client and other involved community resources.
 - If barriers are discovered and good cause for non-compliance is established, a JET Triage Personal Contract will outline what actions are being taken by whom to ensure completion of agreed upon services.
 - If no good cause and/or willingness to comply is found, sanctions are applied.

Sanctions - The “triage” process provides for clear communication among the involved parties, including DHS, JET, and the client, which allows for better fact-gathering, clearer understanding of issues and barriers, and fair, consistent application of sanctions and penalties. Data on the number of sanctions applied and avoided through this process is not yet available.

Barriers – The following are examples of barriers to employment and self-sufficiency that have been identified in the pilot sites thus far:

- Transportation/ high cost of gasoline/accessible and affordable public transportation.
- Lack of driver’s licenses.
- Lack of child care.
- Client is uneducated or undereducated.
- Client is homeless.
- Lack of affordable suitable housing.
- Client resides in a shelter.
- Domestic violence issues.
- Client has a criminal record.
- Language, social isolation, and developmental disabilities.

- Substance abuse.
- Lack of work ethic.
- Lack of job placements for persons who are unskilled or have limited job skills.
- Medical concerns, self esteem and possible mental health issues.
- Child with severe medical/mental and behavioral problems.

Services Needed – The following service needs have been identified at this early stage of pilot implementation:

- Simplified process to provide payment of public transportation system paid by the month.
- Child Day Care (CDC) opened automatically with FIP; specialized day care in certain situations.
- Automated referral process to Community Coordinated Child Care agencies.
- Advocate mentors and mental health counseling.
- Assistance in pursuing Social Security benefits for children.
- Interpreters.
- Housing assistance.
- Domestic violence intervention.
- Substance abuse treatment.
- Mental health treatment.
- Specialized staff to work with this difficult client base.
- Expanded education/training time limits to allow clients to attend vocational school or college for up to two years to obtain a viable skill.
- Second medical opinions on questionable medical information.
- Strategies to assist clients with reinstatement of drivers' licenses.

Recommendations to Reduce 48-Month Cases

- Provide for thorough screening and assessment of family strengths and barriers.
- Provide services needed to remove or reduce barriers and enhance strengths.
- Provide opportunities for increasing client skills.
- Require clients working 40 hours with FIP to improve their job skills.
- Provide moving expenses to relocate clients to high employment areas.
- Provide enhanced post-employment support.